

# Five Distinguished Alumni Recognized by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

Five outstanding SC State alumni were honored at the NAFEO (National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education) 40th Anniversary Distinguished Alumni Awards Luncheon on Saturday, April 4, 2009 at the Renaissance Concourse Hotel in Atlanta, Ga.

The event recognizes alumni of Historically Black Colleges or University (HBCU) and Private Business Institutions (PBI), nominated by their alma maters, who have distinguished themselves in their professions, communities, the nation or the world for excellence and altruism.

This year's recipients were: Lillian Adderson '81, director of Student life and Leadership at SC State, James Gillard '61, Beaufort County Alumni Chapter President, Gloria Pyles '69, director of Title III at SC State, Michael Summers '88, site director for Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation at UGL-UNICCO Corporation and Evia Thomas '63 '78, Retired Educator and Membership Chairperson of the Orangeburg County Alumni Chapter.

“SC State alumni who were honored at the NAFEO luncheon are leaders in their field and uniquely contribute to the community and society. I feel this was an excellent choice of nominees based on their dedication and tireless service to SC State,” said Rodell Lawrence, assistant vice president of Alumni Relations at SC State.



Lillian Adderson, '81



James Gilliard, '61



Gloria Pyles, '69



Michael Summers, '88



Evia Thomas, '63 '78

*Join us for Spring Commencement  
Friday, May 8, 2009 at 7:00p.m.  
and  
The Annual May Weekend*



Jerry McMillan,  
Spring 2009 Commencement Speaker



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Special Edition



SOUTH CAROLINA  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
FOUNDED 1896

A newsletter for alumni, friends, faculty, & staff | May 2009



Dr. George E. Cooper, SC State University's 10th President

*Special . Inaugural Edition*

Focus on the future





Dr. George E. Cooper

# INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF DR. GEORGE E. COOPER, TENTH PRESIDENT OF SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 27, 2009

## EMBRACING EXCELLENCE: MEETING TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES

On June 6, 2008, George E. Cooper was named the 10th President of South Carolina State University. "Tenth President of South Carolina State University"—ah such a short phrase! But a president may not be shortsighted or short-tempered, and he may not fall short on the duties that have been entrusted to him. The phrase "tenth president of SC State" may indeed be short, but the order is tall, very tall. As a former President of Brown University said: a university president is

- o expected to be an educator
- o to have at some time been a scholar
- o to have judgment about finance
- o to know something about construction, maintenance, and labor policies
- o to speak continuously...with charm and never offend
- o to take bold positions with which no one will disagree
- o to do everything through committee but with great speed

**And I would add , of course,**

- o to raise money
- o to appear at all 2 million events that occur in an academic year looking sharp and refreshed
- o and the President's mate, who is unemployed by the University, must appear as well.

This brings me to a story that I would like to share about a new college president before I approach the substance of my address. The story is told that a new college President, like many newly elected presidents, had a very ambitious agenda for his first 100 days. Everyday, he was in his office at 6:00 a.m. He attended university functions; he networked; he met with the faculty, he met with alumni; he served on forums; he prepared elaborate presentations for the Board and monitoring agencies; he addressed university challenges, and so forth. It was not unusual for him to arrive home many nights well after 8:00 p.m. and to work most weekends. After about 60 days of this, the new president was exhausted, and his wife told him, he looked like it. So, the President decided that come what may, he was going to take a break and indulge in his favorite pastime—fishing.

He had heard about a lake not too far from the university where he could rent a boat and fish to his heart's content. Come what may, early Saturday morning, he planned to go fishing.

For the full Inaugural Speech,  
please visit the SC State website:  
[www.scsu.edu](http://www.scsu.edu)

# Students, faculty say Cooper offers hope

Reprinted from the Times and Democrat

By LEE TANT, T&D Staff Writer Saturday, March 28, 2009

Two South Carolina State University students at the opposite ends of their college careers were standing outside Smith-Hammond-Middleton Memorial Center, discussing the inauguration of President Dr. George E. Cooper Friday.

Reginald Judge, a senior psychology major, says he feels the ceremony signaled a new start for the university. Cooper's policies will guide future classes well, he said.

Judge liked that Cooper discussed "working as a group instead of working as an individual" during his inaugural address.

"I feel pretty confident we can work as a team," he said.

Freshman Harry McNeil says he doesn't know quite what to expect.

"I could see how he grows as I grow," McNeil said.

As he formally accepted the responsibilities of running the historically black institution, Cooper said S.C. State must continue embracing its 113-year-old land grant mission of providing access to higher education.

"Our mission hasn't changed, but it is different," the university's 10th president said.

He said the university must get in sync with the technological age and focus on science going forward.

Cooper also stressed the need to make the university more diverse. In addition, he said S.C. State must adapt its curriculum to meet the challenges of a global economy.

Cooper invoked the metaphor of a swim team working together to outline the necessity of university stakeholders being in concert. As captain of the S.C. State "swim team," Cooper pledged to maximize resources, put students first, scrutinize academic programs to ensure their effectiveness and engage the community.

He touched on the university's history and progress, saying it has grown tremendously since starting out as an agricultural school with a few animals and 12 faculty members in 1896. Now, he noted, S.C. State has become a comprehensive teaching institution with tens of thousands of alumni.

Associate English professor Dr. Butler Brewton thought Cooper's address was highly encouraging. He says the university should make enormous progress under Cooper.

"I'm coming out of this ritual with great hope and energy, and I'm ready to go," Brewton said.

With the nation facing an uncertain financial climate, S.C. State biology professor Dr. Omari Dyson said he needed a sense of hope. He said he found that in Cooper's words.

"I'm looking forward to the journey he takes us on," Dyson said.

Freshman Nicole Barkley said Cooper, who started his tenure last July, has already been a great president.

"Cooper is like a father figure to students and is always visible on campus," she said.

"You can see his presence and his face. It's what makes him a good leader," Barkley said.

Alumna Leona Middleton believes Cooper will increase fund raising and government funding for the university.

She liked that Cooper discussed some of the university's accomplishments.

"State is a very good university. We really don't get the credit we deserve," she said.

Dr. Colien Hefferan, Cooper's lifelong friend and former colleague, introduced him at the inauguration.

She said Cooper has always been a great listener. Hefferan and Cooper attended graduate school together at the University of Illinois. Cooper was the man who wanted to know everybody on campus, Hefferan said.

Hefferan said Cooper has lived an interesting life by traveling the world and being a mentor.

"He's lived a life of purpose," she said.

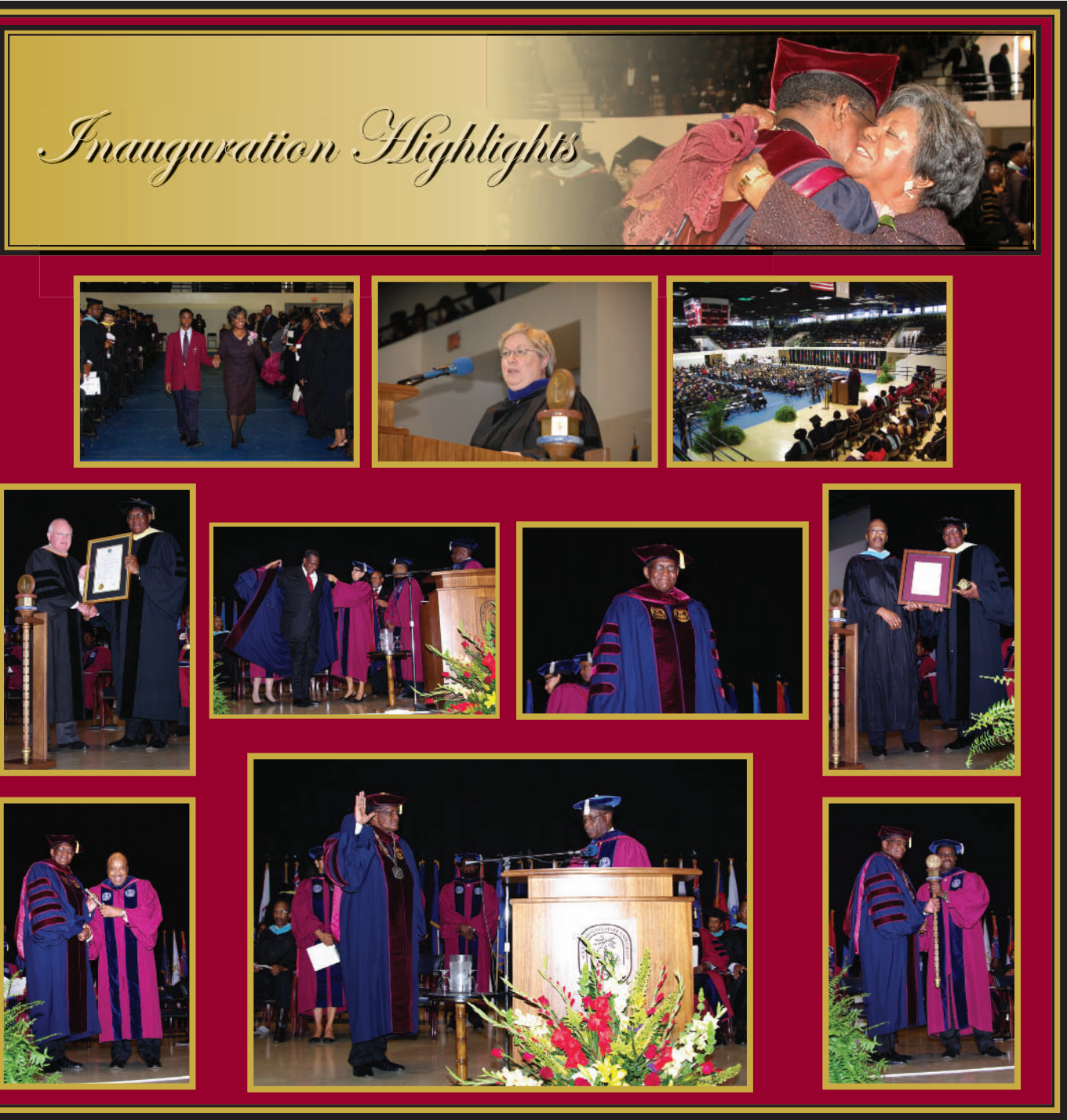
Cooper's new purpose is leading the university to new heights.

S.C. State Board Chairman Lumus Byrd said Cooper has "really hit the ground running" in that regard. He said Cooper doesn't have to be able to walk on water.

But Byrd added, "He does have to be able to swim well."

Cooper told the audience at his inauguration he can do that.

"I can assure you this president can swim through the waters of higher education," he said.





## Kudos flow to new SC State president

Reprinted From The Post and Courier

### About Dr. George Cooper

**BORN:** June 29, 1945, Tallahassee, Fla.

**OCCUPATION:** President, South Carolina State University in Orangeburg

**FAMILY:** Wife, Diane Shaw Cooper; daughters, Nikki Cooper, 36, Carey Cooper, 31

**EDUCATION:** Doctorate in animal nutrition, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill., 1972; Master of Science in animal science, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Ala., 1969; Bachelor of Science in animal husbandry, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Fla., 1967.

**THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE:** Parents Bertram and the Late Mildred Cooper; aunt and uncle, the late Cornelius and Josie Speed; former pastor the Rev. C.K. Steel; and a host of friends and mentors.

**FAVORITE CHILDHOOD MEMORY:** Learning to swim in the public pools of Tallahassee, Fla.

**IDEAL WAY TO SPEND A DAY:** Playing golf and going to a movie with my family.

**FAVORITE MUSIC:** Gospel, and hits from the 1960s and 1970s.

**FANTASY DINNER GUESTS:** Booker T. Washington, Barack Obama, Mary McLeod Bethune and Martin Luther King Jr. We would all meet at former President Jimmy Carter's house in Plains, Ga.

**ADVICE FOR STUDENTS ON BEING SUCCESSFUL IN COLLEGE:** Commit to a major, and take seriously challenges related to academic pursuits and your future career.

No one who knows George Cooper is surprised that he recently became president of South Carolina State University, the state's only public historically black university. Being an educator is in his blood.

He was born to two educators in Tallahassee, Fla. His father, Bertram Cooper, earned a college degree in music and was among the first generation in his family to attend college. Bertram Cooper became a musician, playing with the Tuskegee Air Corps Band during World War II, and later taught music. His mother, the late Mildred Cooper, was a teacher and guidance counselor.

And George Cooper's wife of 40 years, Diane, worked as a guidance counselor in Maryland's Montgomery County School District before moving to Orangeburg with her husband in July.

Cooper came to S.C. State from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where he most recently held the position of deputy administrator for science and education resource development.

He left an academic post as vice president for academic affairs at Alabama A&M University in 1991 to take the USDA job in Washington.

He expected to stay with the department for about a year.

But life had another plan that kept him in Washington for 17 years and moved him through four positions in the department.

### Landing in Orangeburg

Although he worked for the federal government, he didn't stray far from education. In his most recent USDA position, he coordinated higher education programs for land-grant institutions, a position that kept him in close contact with campuses throughout the country.

"I can go to any land-grant campus in the U.S. and meet a friend in five minutes," Cooper said.

It was through those connections that he learned the president's post at S.C. State was open, he said.

He applied, landed the job and was on his way to Orangeburg just a few months later.

Cooper said he and his wife keep their lives interesting by taking risks. They dove headfirst into campus life at S.C. State.

They're living in a two-student suite in one of the residence halls on campus until a home they're building in Orangeburg is complete. Their suite has two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a kitchen, "and we use every square inch," he said.

Cooper's inauguration will be Friday on the school's campus. He's S.C. State's 10th president.

Benjamin Payton, president of Tuskegee University and an S.C. State alumnus, said Cooper is the right person to lead the university. "I was very pleased to learn he had been named president of my alma mater," Payton said.

He met Cooper at Tuskegee in 1981. Cooper was a faculty member at the time, but Payton promoted him to dean of the College of Environmental and Natural Sciences. "He did an extraordinary job," Payton said. "He was unusually hard working."

Cooper had an unusual ability to be honest and speak his mind about things without being pushy, Payton said.

"He was a useful colleague as well as a dependable one," he said. And he was "highly respected by his colleagues."

Ted Wilson, who has known Cooper for decades, echoes Payton's views on Cooper's professional character. Wilson met Cooper at Tuskegee in 1969. Cooper was working on his master's degree and Wilson was a faculty member. Wilson later started working at the USDA as the deputy administrator for animal and plant sciences. He recruited Cooper to the department.

And he knows Cooper personally, too. "He's a family man and church-going person, very involved there," he said.

Cooper is a great cook, he added. He can make anything, and his homemade biscuits are fantastic, he said.

### Friend and mentor

Cooper's oldest daughter, Nikki Cooper, 36, said one of the things she loves about her dad is that he's the same person in public and in private.

"He's such a nice person," she said. "He's always been like that. But he also can be so firm without saying a lot."

And, she added, "My friends just love him."

When her parents lived in the Maryland suburbs, she said, her father was mentor to many children. Now, parents from her father's former church say they're considering sending their children to S.C. State because the Coopers are there.

Nikki Cooper, a real estate agent in Bowie, Md., said her father works hard, often starting his days at 3:30 a.m. But he can leave work behind at the end of day. In his free time, he likes to golf, spend time with family and watch movies.

George Cooper said he's still getting used to being a public figure in the state. Recently, he and his wife went to see a movie in Columbia. The woman selling tickets recognized him as the president of S.C. State.

Nikki said that's the one aspect of the job she can't immediately envision her dad embracing. "He doesn't need the limelight," she said.

## Cooper's Carnival Highlights



## Before he was President...



President and First Lady Diane Cooper, Tuskegee University



President Cooper marries Diane Shaw on June 22, 1968.



President Cooper and his mother, Mrs. Mildred Cooper, FAMU graduation



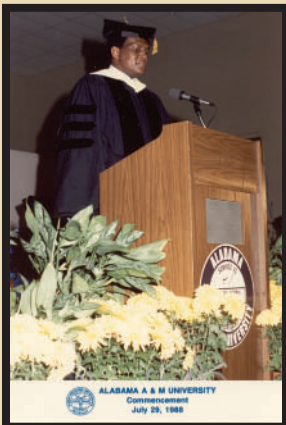
President Cooper at 3-years-old



President Cooper in the basic ROTC program at Florida A&M University



Diane S. Cooper, First Lady, Carey Cooper, Nikki Cooper and President Cooper, Huntsville AL



Alabama A&M University Commencement July 1988



# SC State leader’s wife sets her sights on student service

Reprinted from the Times and Democrat



First Lady Diane Cooper

South Carolina State University’s new first lady says she’s committed to student development and recruitment just like her husband, Dr. George E. Cooper who will be inaugurated as S.C. State’s 10th president on March 27.

Diane Cooper says she will take on her official role as the university’s first lady with pride and sees it as an opportunity to be “the official hostess, ambassador and mother of the students here.”

“I have already taken it with such pride and such joy. It’s a blessing. I feel very honored to be first lady of South Carolina State University. We’ve been very, very pleased with the support and love that we feel that we’re getting from the city of Orangeburg,” she said.

Mrs. Cooper said while she will not be involved in the day-to-day activities of the university because that is the president’s job, she will support his decision-making with a firm belief that he has the best interest of the historically black institution at heart.

“I trust his judgment. He’s intelligent; he’s knowledgeable. I support him. I pray for him. I know that he’s going to make wise decisions. My role is definitely more student-centered,” said Cooper, who has an extensive background of service to students.

She retired on June 13 last year from the Montgomery County Public School System in Rockville, Md., where she was a school counselor and resource counselor. Prior to that, she was a counselor in the public school system of Huntsville, Ala.; coordinator of counseling for the ROTC Skills Center at Alabama A&M University; supervisor of counseling and orientation at the Tuskegee University Job Corps Center and home economics teacher in the Champaign County Public School System in Champaign, Ill. and the Orange County Public School System in Orlando, Fla.

“My love is students. My husband came in saying that he’s student-centered without a doubt. I’ve been a high school counselor for numbers of years ... I feel so honored now to have been almost transitioned to college. I’ve spent my entire profession ... encouraging students to take advantage of higher education,” Cooper said. “Now that I’m here, I feel that I’m pushing them on to greater things.”

She said her activities will center around enhancing her relationship with students and alumni. For example, she said she and Dr. Cooper have visited at least 16 alumni chapters across the nation, including Orlando and Chicago, in what she calls a “road show” designed to become more acquainted with chapter members.

“We want to meet our alumni, so I’m involved in recruitment for students. I’ve talked with parents. I’ve said things to parents that I mean from the bottom of my heart.

We’re there for their kids, and I see the joy in their faces when I say that. My involvement includes community involvement, but I’m more involved in every aspect of student life that I can,” said Cooper, who was the first African-American student to enroll and graduate with a bachelor of science degree from the College of Human Sciences at Florida State University. She received her master’s degree in education from Tuskegee University.

Cooper has already started reaching out to students by speaking in freshman orientation classes and visiting study halls for student-athletes. She said that while she loves athletics and she and her husband are “out-of-control cheerleaders” at all sporting events, academic achievement is equally important to her.

“We have more honor students this year than ever. So, we’re very proud with the caliber of students that we have that are interested in South Carolina State. We know that we have to do our very, very best to keep them,” said Cooper, who has also gotten involved with groups such as the Student Government Association.

“We’ve had from nine to 12 lock-ins with girls. I think they call them love-ins,” she said. The love-ins are a social development initiative of the SGA initiated by reigning Miss South Carolina State University Uchechi Egbuhuzo.

“We’re talking about 60 mainly freshman girls talking about what’s on their mind,” Cooper said. “I’ve had lectures with students, dinner with students and I’ve talked with students. I encourage them. Anything related to student progress and development is my passion.”

Cooper will be the host of the university’s sixth annual First Lady Scholarship Luncheon at noon on Thursday at the Kirkland W. Green Student Center.

“This year, we’re honoring 25 ladies. Fifteen of them will be adults from the community and the university in arts, education, fine arts, law enforcement, politics and medicine. These are unsung heroes. We’ve had wonderful response,” she said.

Cooper said her husband’s own commitment to helping the university overcome funding challenges – while at the same time trying to revitalize building projects across campus – is commendable.

“I think my husband came in at a very critical time, and that was during the financial crisis. I was pleased with the way he tackled that. ... He was able to spot things that could be done to keep us from being in worse shape that we are right now,” Cooper said, noting the hard work and cooperation of the president’s cabinet and other staff members.

She also cited the continued development of the Clyburn Transportation Center and the Miller F. Whittaker Library under her husband’s auspices.

“He’s working on a lot of building projects that will make South Carolina State a better institute,” Cooper said. “We’re very, very pleased with the university, but I think his involvement and commitment to this university can make it an even greater university.”

## First Lady’s Luncheon Highlights



More than 240 women gathered for the First Lady Luncheon that raised over \$15,000 for student scholarships.



Mrs. Cooper greets guests during the First Lady Luncheon.



Mrs. Cooper and Dr. Margaret Felder Wilson, Co-Chairperson of the First Lady Luncheon Committee



Mrs. Cooper and Family



Mrs. Cooper and the “Unsung Heroes”



Ellen Zisholtz, director of the I.P. Stanback Museum and Planetarium, also received special recognition for her contributions to the museum and surrounding community.